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High-impact interpersonal skills

How to be a persuasive leader

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High-impact interpersonal skills: How to be a persuasive leader
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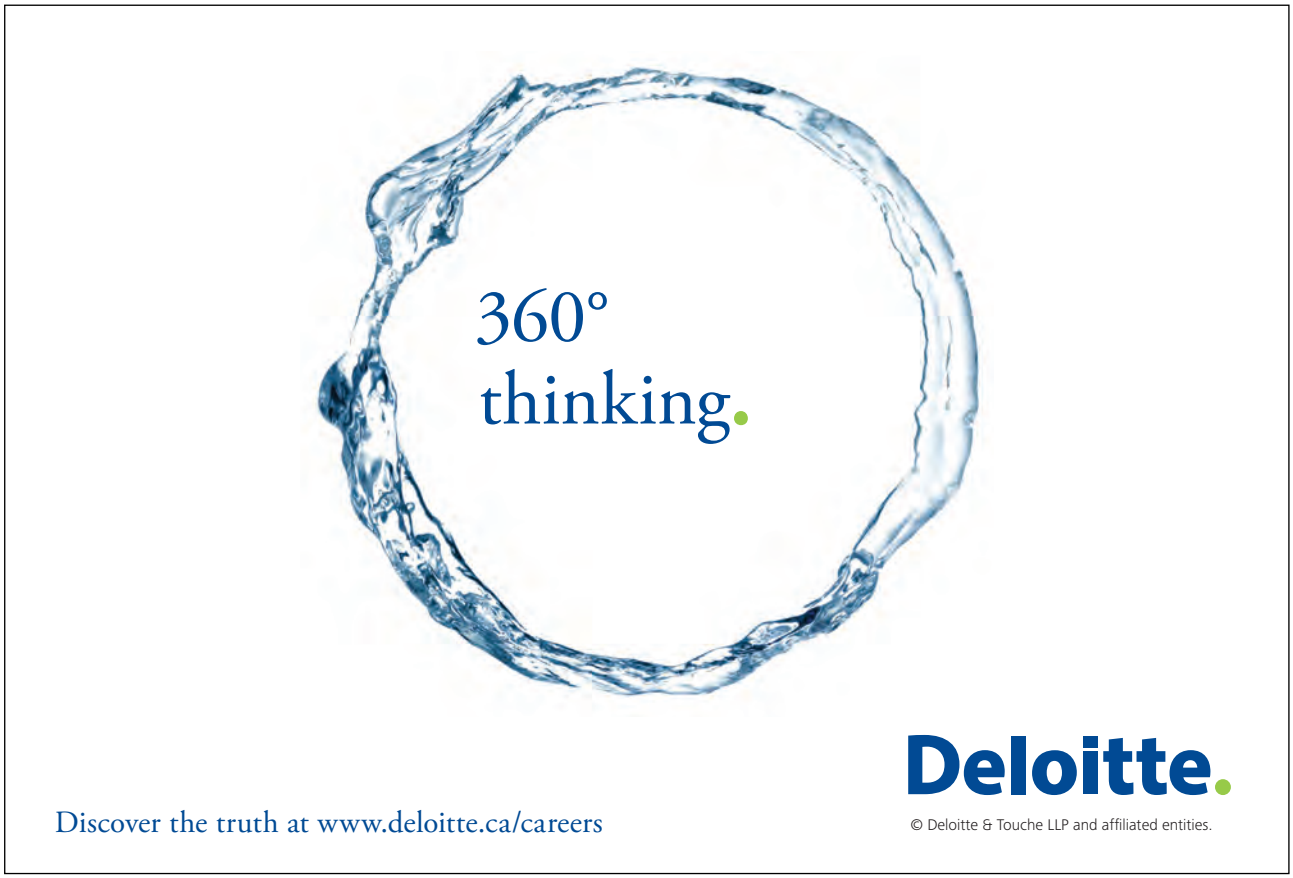

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Preface

Most suveys into what employers want in their staff would result in a similar list. Employers are looking for people who are good at:

- Teamwork
- Communication
- Self-motivation
- Planning and organising
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Time management and prioritising
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Willingness to learn
- Interpersonal and negotiating skills

In our companion e-book: Hidden Communication Skills Revealed, we discussed the career skills that make you stand-out. These essential inter-personal skills for managing an effective career included:

- Active listening
- Body language
- Assertiveness
- Questioning skills

However, this e-book goes one step further. It's looks at the more advanced inter-personal skills needed to be an effective leader.

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About the Author

Apex Leadership Limited was founded by Anthony Sturgess and Phil Higson. They have a long track record of developing innovative and challenging management and leadership development interventions, including programmes which have won national awards. From several MBA programmes to tailored, client specific programmes, Anthony and Phil have worked with new and experienced managers, in a wide range of organisations, across a breadth of management and leadership roles.

Anthony Sturgess has almost twenty years experience in the teaching, facilitation and coaching of managers and leaders. This experience ranges from individual leadership and management development to leading organisational change.

Anthony has worked with a wide range of managers from small and large organisations. More widely, he has worked within client organisations, using an internal consultancy approach to create tailored development solutions and programmes. These have supported numerous public and private sector organisations to successfully develop their managers, to achieve effective change, and to realise genuine organisational improvements.

Phil Higson is a published author and active researcher, with over 25 years experience in business and management education as lecturer, course developer, manager, external examiner and consultant. He has worked mainly in UK universities although he has also consulted or taught in France, Russia and Hong Kong.

A former MBA course leader, Phil has also written research articles and conference papers exploring the role of business schools in workplace management development. Before becoming an educator, Phil worked in several small and large organisations, in both the UK and Australia.

This combination of management experience in small and large organisations, in both private and public sectors, has given Phil a wide ranging perspective on work and management. Phil has authored or created numerous training and development tools and is experienced in managing large projects to support management and leadership development in a range of organisations.

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Or you can visit the major online resource developed by Apex Leadership at:
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1 Introduction

This e-book explores how leaders can develop the high-impact inter-personal skills which will make them both more effective and more successful.

Ask most employees about what could be improved in their organisation and there is one topic that's almost sure to be near the top of the list. Communication. This doesn't just mean knowing what's happening. It also means receiving effective communication as part of the way they are managed or led.

Effective communication is perhaps one of the most important skills any manager or leader can develop. In this e-book we will explore how leaders can use communication skills to make them both more effective, and more successful. Focusing particularly on *inter-personal* communication skills, we'll look at a range of topics, including:

- Influencing
- Persuasion
- Delegation
- Coaching
- Presentations
- Handling conflict
- Facilitation
- Leading meetings

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2 Influencing

What does "influencing" mean? An obvious place to start is with dictionary definitions. Influencing is defined by various dictionaries as:

- The ability to change someone's views, attitude or behaviours in a positive way.
- The power of a person to have an effect on someone else resulting from ability, wealth, position etc…

When considering what it means to influence, it's important to note that some definitions of leadership refer explicitly to influencing as an integral part of leadership. For example, in his text book on Management and Organisational behaviour, Laurie Mullens discusses what leadership means:

"It is difficult to generalise about leadership, but essentially it is a relationship through which one person **influences** the behaviour or actions of other people. This means that the process of leadership cannot be separated from the activities of groups and with effective team building."

Even where definitions of leadership don't explicitly refer to influencing, you can often find an implicit reference. Such as in this definition of leadership from US academic Warren Bennis:

"People who know what they want and why they want it, and have the skills to communicate that to others in a way that gains support"

So how do you communicate in a way that "gains support"?

2.1 Power and influence

There may be occasions where you have felt that you have been tricked into doing something, or perhaps coerced. Neither method tends to leave a good impression of the person who has done the tricking or the coercion. It could be said that this person exerted influence but it's not likely to be the kind of influence that is sustainable. People don't like being coerced or tricked. So how can we affect the behaviour of another person by influencing in a more positive manner?

We'll think of some specific skill areas later but first a word about sources of power. One definition of influence refers to the power someone has to affect another person's behaviour or attitude. Power can be thought of in a number of ways, each relevant to the way leaders can influence others.

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Three ways you can think of power are:

1. **Position power** – this is power that someone has because of their position in the organisation.
2. **Expert power** – this is power based on someone's expertise, their skills and knowledge.
3. **Person power** – this is power that someone has because of how others think of them. If they are respected, valued and trusted then people are far more likely to listen and respond positively to them.

Think about your own situation and the possible power sources you have available. How can you build your own personal power based on these points?

Although a leader may well have a mix of each, the third power source is particularly interesting in the context of inter-personal communication skills. A person can have power to influence others largely because they have developed trust and credibility with those they seek to influence.

Alongside these notions of power, there are a number of skills that can be developed to help you to influence more effectively. Here we will consider:

- Active listening
- Being interested in others
- Aware of body language
- Assertiveness
- Building rapport

2.2 Active listening and being interested in others

Active listening can be defined as:

- "The act of alert intentional hearing, interpretation, and demonstration of an interest in what a person has to say through verbal signal, nonverbal gestures, and body language." (Mosby's Medical Dictionary)

How does active listening relate to your ability to influence? Because a key part of person power is being respected, valued and trusted, and to do this you need to be understood. And if you want to be better understood, first you need to understand others better. Take for instance this insight from the Danish philosopher and theologian, Soren Kierkegard:

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"In order to help another effectively, I must understand what he understands. If I do not know that, my greater understanding will be of no help to him… instruction begins when you put yourself in his place so that you may understand what he understands and in the way he understands it."

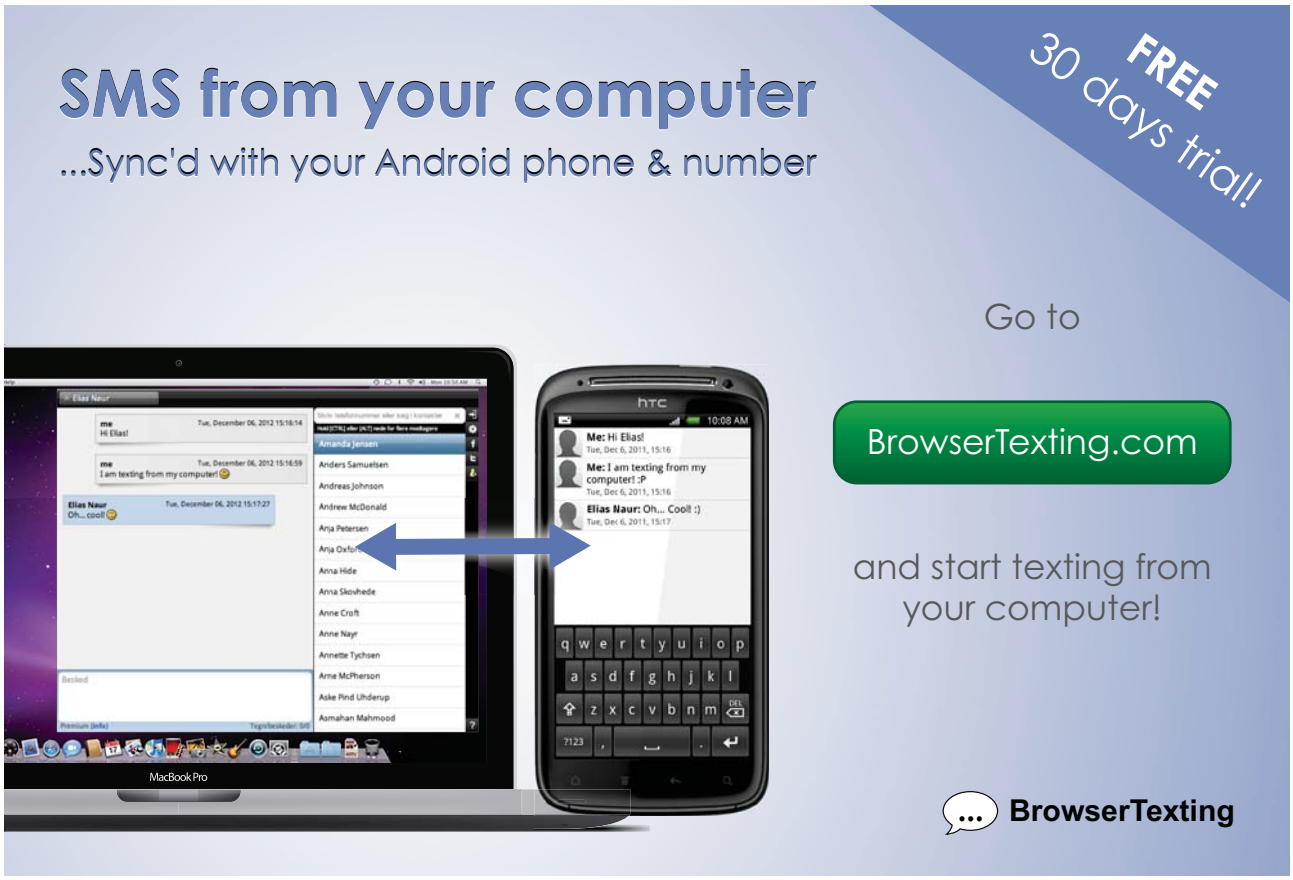
Putting yourself in the shoes of others is a potent example of active listening, but it also suggests the second of the influencing skills, that of being interested in others. When others sense you are interested in them, and interested in their views, they are far more likely to respect and listen to yours. In many ways this is what US leadership writer, Jay Conger expresses in his own assessment of what makes an effective leader:

"The most effective leaders study the issues that matter to their colleagues…in…conversations…they collect essential information. They are good at listening. They test their ideas with trusted confidants, and they ask questions of the people they will later be persuading. These explorations help them to think through the arguments, the evidence, and the perspectives they will present."

(Jay Conger, in Theory and Practice of Leadership, 1999)

2.3 Body language and being assertive

Being aware of your body language is another critical element of influencing. Your demeanour, movements and actions are all fundamentally important to influencing skills.



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Body language matters. Why? Because before you open your mouth to say anything, your body has already spoken volumes. Various researchers suggest that upwards of 50% of our communication is by our body language. A dictionary definition for body language is:

- The conscious and unconscious movements and postures by which attitudes and feelings are communicated. (Oxford Dictionaries)

A key aspect of effective body language is congruence. You are behaving in a congruent way when what you say mirrors your body language. We're all suprisingly good at noticing when someone is not being very convincing, usually when their body language doesn't back up their words. When it comes to what we believe, body language is far more convincing than the words people say.

This is particularly important for a leader attempting to convey confidence and assurance. Getting your body language right will encourage trust and help you influence and thus lead. All of these aspects of body language combined lead to positivity and assertiveness, another key inter-personal skill. Assertiveness is defined as:

- Communicating you views and feelings in a calm, direct and respectful way whilst respecting equally the views of others

2.4 Building rapport

The mutual respect implicit in assertiveness helps to create trust and is an important aspect of building rapport. Building rapport is defined as:

- A sustained relationship of mutual understanding or trust and agreement between people.

Rapport exists when two people develop a mutual feeling of understanding, harmony, well-being and security. It is the result of an open and trusted relationship. Rapport is also about meeting people at their level, ensuring they are comfortable with you.

Both verbal and non-verbal (body) language have a key role to play in this. An important aspect of rapport is empathising with people's viewpoints. When you have rapport with someone you feel at ease and conversations tend to flow.

Influencing then becomes almost a natural consequence of having built a rapport with others. It is when influencing seems to be at its most natural that it is probably at its most effective.

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2.5 Influencing skills summary

Influencing skills are a combination of various inter-personal skills. When brought together, these can help you to be effective in changing someone's views, attitudes or behaviours, in a positive way. How effective are you at influencing others?

Sources of power to influence
•Which sources of power can you use to influence?
•Position power
•Expert power
•Personal power
Active listening and being interested
•Giving time to other to listen
•Demonstrated you are interested
Body language and assertiveness
•How does you body language demonstrate your are confident and assured
•Putting your view forward confidently whilst valuing and recognising other peoples positons and views
Building rapport
•Mutual understanding and trust
•emphaising with other people's viewpoints

(Active listening, body language and assertiveness are each explored in more detail in our companion e-book: Hidden Communication Skills Revealed. This focuses on the core inter-personal skills essential to effective communication.)

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3 Persuading

While the previous section focused on indirect ways to influence others, it's also important to develop your powers of persuasion. Effective leadership often requires such direct methods to influence those we lead.

Persuasion is defined as: the act or process of persuading someone to do or believe something. But how do you set about persuading someone? This is by no means a new question. Indeed, in some ways it's one that the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle is said to have addressed.

3.1 Ethos, logos and pathos

Aristotle is said to have separated the means of persuading someone into three kinds of "appeals":

- An appeal to "ethos" – the credibility of the person making the persuasive argument. How convinced are you by the person
- An appeal to "logos" – the use of logic to support a claim. Do the facts stack up?
- An appeal to "pathos" – the emotional or motivational appeal. Does the argument appeal to the emotions? Language choice can affect people's emotional response.

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However, don't confuse open and honest persuasiveness with other, more negative ways to influence. For example, contrast persuasion with two other ways to change a person's view:

- Propaganda, which tends to be ideologically driven and an ethically questionable approach to influencing.
- Manipulation, which suggests coercive attitudes or actions.

Persuasion should be seen as neutral, in the sense that it is not seeking to be ideologically driven or coercive.

3.2 Arguing if you're right, listening as if you're wrong!

Stanford University Professor Bob Sutton argues that leaders should adopt this approach to influencing:

Argue as if you are right, listen as if you are wrong.

The two sides of this approach mirror the notion of advocacy and inquiry. Advocacy is making your thinking process visible.

"Here is my view and this is how I arrived at the view"

In relation to developing your inter-personal skills, **advocacy** is about:

- Making your point, taking a position in an attempt to influence others.
- Supporting your viewpoint with how you came to that view, whilst remaining open to alternative views.

On the other hand, inquiry means asking others to make their thinking process visible.

"How does it sound to you? What makes sense to you and what doesn't"?

Inquiry is about:

- How questions are raised and answered.
- Allowing people to inquire into one another's reasoning and understand the conclusion they have reached.

Advocacy and inquiry are two sides of being persuasive. You make your best case for what you think is right, doing so as convincingly as possible. But you do this whilst listening very carefully to those around you, and being willing to change your view as a result.

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3.3 Selling a message.

Being persuasive also means being able to sell a message. This is an important aspect of persuasiveness for a number of reasons. Selling a message can mean:

- Convincing colleagues of a particular approach.
- Bringing employees on-board with your ideas.
- Persuading customers to buy your services or products.

Let's consider selling a message with respect to your customers. There is an old adage that *people buy from people*. So building your relationship and rapport with customers is a crucial skill. How do you do that? First try building your credibility by selling your own strengths. Such as:

- Your competence
- Your experience
- Your track record

Next you need to be clear about distinguishing between features and benefits. There is another sales adage: *people buy benefits, not features*. So what are the differences?

- Features – describe a fact or characteristic of a service, *what the service is.*
- Benefits – are something customers have said they want, *what the service will do for them.*

Often there is a tendency to talk "features" rather than finding out benefits from the client.

How do you know if you are talking about features rather than benefits? Here's one test:

- If you can't come up with a sensible reply to "So what?" then you're probably talking features.
- If you can name the feature then follow it with "so this means…", then you're talking benefits!

Being truly persuasive means focusing on benefits. So how do you avoid the "features trap"? Here's a simple 3 step process:

1. Ask the client enough questions to discover what it is they need from you.
2. Link what the customer wants to the specific features of your offering, which match those benefits.
3. Use the phrase "which means that" to convert features to benefits.

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Whilst these points apply especially to customers they are equally valid when dealing with colleagues and employees. It's highly likely that they'll be far more convinced by benefits than they will by features. And remember that whilst we most of us may claim to be logical, the real picture can be much less clear. As Dale Carnegie once put it:

"When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures of emotion, creatures with prejudice and motivated by pride and vanity."

3.4 Persuasion skills summary

The following table provides a brief summary of the main points we've discussed about persuasion. Think about how you can become more persuasive in your inter-personal communication.

Your appeal - ethos, logos and pathos
•Ethos - do you have credibility? How can you build your credibility?
•Logos - do the facts stack up? How can you build a convincing argument?
•Pathos - does your message appeal to the emotions? How can you discover what is important to people, things that matter to them?
Balancing advocacy and inquiry
•Argue your view convincingly, as if you are right.
•Listen intently to other views, as if you are wrong.
Selling the message
•Build your credibility, people buy from people.
•Focus on benefits rather than features.
•Ask, both clients and colleagues, sufficient questions - so that you know what they need.

How can you develop your powers of persuasion in the workplace?

Think about times when you have found other people to have been particularly persuasive. What persuaded you? How did they do it?

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4 Delegating

At first thought it may seem strange to consider delegation as a communication skill for leaders. It is more usually understood as a management task. However, some of the critical steps in effective delegation are also crucial communication skills. When delegation goes wrong, it's often due to ineffective or a complete breakdown in communication. Here we will consider the particular communications skills which are associated with delegation, including:

- Building trust.
- Communicating what is expected.
- Giving a clear brief.
- Encouraging questions.
- Providing support, encouragement and giving feedback.

Perhaps the best way to consider communication skills in relation to delegation is to relate them to the steps and stages of delegation.

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4.1 Delegation defined

Firstly what do we mean by delegation? Delegation is giving responsibility to someone to carry out tasks that you might normally do yourself. By delegating you give others the authority to do things, but you remain accountable for the outcome.

To understand delegation it's useful to answer some key questions:

- How do you give responsibility to someone else?
- How do you ensure they feel clear about what they are being asked to do?
- How do you support and encourage those to whom you have delegated responsibility?

4.2 Why delegate?

Before considering the "how" questions above, perhaps we need to answer an even more pressing question. Why delegate in the first place? There is a common tendency for leaders to try and keep hold of tasks, activities and processes. What's wrong with this? Well, the famous industrialist Andrew Carnegie provided a powerful answer to this question:

"No person will make a great business who wants to do it all himself or get all the credit."

This quote from Carnegie makes two good points. Firstly, to grow you need to trust other people to get important things done. Secondly, when you do delegate and someone is doing the tasks really well, give them the credit for what they are doing.

Delegation also matters at a practical level. It:

- Releases your time to concentrate on other key tasks.
- Develops the capability of others in your team.

Leaders delegate both to give themselves more time to lead, and crucially to help others to develop and grow in their abilities and responsibilities.

4.3 How do you delegate?

Done well, delegation is an invaluable tool for leaders. However, to do it well we must think of it as a process. This includes several stages and proper use of a set of communication skills. Combining these will help ensure that delegation is effective. The 5 stages for effective delegation are:

1. **Identify the person**

- Trust the other person and build trust.
- Apply the willing and able test – do they want to do the task and have they the capability to do it?

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2. **Select the task**

- Match the right person to the task, and their development needs.
- Don't delegate just the mundane! Delegate activities that are worthwhile and valuable.
- BUT do delegate less important tasks, allowing you more time to focus on the important.
- Think about delegating tasks to others in your team who have strengths in areas that you might not possess. Others may have strengths where you have weaknesses.

3. **Clarify expectations**

- Outline what is expected and what needs to be achieved. Make sure you clarify how this task fits with other things that are being done and why it matters.
- Specify the outcome and key things that need to be achieved. Let the individual work out how they will achieve this.
- Give a clear briefing.

4. **Provide support, encouragement and feedback**

- Encourage questions, continue to be available and plan to monitor and review progress.
- Review initially in a supportive manner, then less frequently over time as the individual's expertise increases. Don't be "looking over someone's shoulder" all the time.
- Provide support appropriate to your colleague's need. Avoid the two extremes sometimes associated with poor delegation. Either of abdicating your own responsibility to support, or of being over-bearing, retaining too much control.

5. **Review**

- Did the delegation activity result in you being free to focus on other important leadership tasks?
- How did the person to whom you delegated develop? Have they increased their own capability and expertise?
- What lessons have you learned from delegating?

Here's why it's best to leave others to work out how to do something:

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." – General George Smith Patton, Jr.

The 5 stages for delegation provide a structured set of steps to follow. They identify **what** is needed to be done. However, understanding **how** to delegate means focusing on the communication skills needed.

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4.4 Communication skills for delegation

In the following table the range of communication skills needed for delegation are highlighted on the left hand side.

Identify the person
• Building trust and understanding.
• Listening and questioning to understand an individual's strengths.
Select the task
• Discussion of development needs to idnetify oportunities.
• Self-reflection to recognise what best to delegate.
• Conversations about what tasks to delegate.
Clarify expectations
• Clarify what is required and expected.
• Specify the outcome and key things that need to be achieved. BUT don't detail how it should be done. Where appropriate, allow freedom for the individual to work out how they might achieve the outcome.
Provide support and encourgaement
• Encourage questions to ensure understanding.
• Balance support with allowing the individual to get on with their tasks.
• Be available and listen.
• Provide feedback and encouragement.
Review
• Discuss with the indiivdual how they feel they have developed.
• Ask for feedback on your own roel and performance. In what ways did you help?

4.5 Delegation Quick Checklist

Finally here is a quick checklist to help you manage the communication of delegation. You can also use this checklist as a way to review how you have delegated by adding comments to the stages.

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STEP	ACTION	COMMENTS
Who	Identify the person and match the person to the task, their capability and development needs	
What	Select the task, or project	
How	Brief clearly. And agree SMART objectives	
Next	Provide support as appropriate and be available	
PIP	Set up mini-reviews to discuss Progress, Issues and Plans (PIP)	

As a final thought on delegation consider the words of Theodore Roosevelt:

"The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it."

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5 Coaching

There will be many occasions where a colleague doesn't feel they are capable of having a particular task delegated to them, or it may be the first time they have experienced the delegation process. In both of these situations what might be needed is coaching support. In the first scenario, your colleague may need coaching to develop their ability to handle the task. In the second, they may need coaching to help them understand how delegation works.

There may be several other reasons why someone needs coaching. Perhaps to help with:

- New skill development.
- Confidence building.
- Understanding a process.
- A way of reflecting on and improving their practice.
- Support during the management of a change programme in the organisation.
- To develop as a leader.
- Career development.

A coaching need is a development need. Such needs tend to be fairly specific and are best addressed with clear goals or focus.

5.1 What is coaching?

Coaching is a process which supports people in developing their skills and achieving their goals. This is done by helping people:

- Set mutually agreed goals.
- Identify activities and ways to develop their skills, abilities and experience.
- Plan and then review what they have done, by using questions and providing feedback.

There are several approaches to coaching, though there tends to be broad agreement that all involve:

- Activities to develop someone's skills and abilities.
- Adopting non-directive approaches to development, though there are differing views about the extent to which coaching may be directive.
- Focusing on improving performance.
- Developing goals that are both organisational and individual.
- Providing feedback on both strengths and weaknesses.

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It is suggested that the roots of the term coaching date back to around 1830, in one of the most famous universities in the world, Oxford University. The word coach was used as slang for a tutor who "carries" a student through an exam. It now means something different, conveying more the sense of supporting people to get from where they are to where they want to be. This notion still expresses much that is central to coaching.

More recently coaching has been defined as:

- Guiding people toward better performance.
- The process of guiding the learner through an experience, as opposed to directing the learner through the experience.
- A coach "sets mutually agreed targets with individuals and teams, plans how to achieve them, then delegates the authority to get on with it and monitors but does not intervene in reality – the "eyes on and hands off" approach." (Bob Garratt).
- "Coaching is about performing at your best through the individual and private assistance of someone who will challenge, stimulate and guide you to keep growing" (Gerard Donovan)

It is also possible and useful to contrast coaching with training and mentoring. These activities may be related and can overlap, but it's also easy to confuse them. Here are some key differences between training, mentoring and coaching:

- Training – is a more explicit definition of knowledge and skills, usually led by the trainer. It involves instructional techniques used to aid learning.
- Mentoring – is a more open two-way exchange, with less specific goals, usually prompted by the mentee (person being mentored). It involves broad discussion, with the mentor acting as a guide. Mentors often act as signposts, suggesting areas to address or making introductions for mentees to discuss points with others.

5.2 The 5 P's of coaching

One useful way to think about coaching is to use the 5 P's approach. The 5 P's of coaching include:

- **Preparation** – deciding together on what should be discussed at the coaching session. Gathering information and wherever possible objective evidence of progress to date. Reviewing the previous discussion plans.
- **Presence** – making sure as a coach that you give undivided attention, conveying that the coaching session is important, and listening attentively.
- **Practice** – planning how new skills, knowledge and behaviours can be practiced to develop competence and confidence.
- **Play-back** – provide feedback on how someone is progressing and developing.
- **Perform** – the aim of coaching is to see someone apply their skills in activities that make a contribution to the performance of the team and the organisation. How do they have an impact on performance?

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Done properly, coaching is a very effective way to help people develop. Coaching requires leaders to provide people with regular contact, explore their progress and help them to decide how to develop further.

5.3 Communication skills for coaching

Coaching is an involved and skilful process. It assumes the coach has some practical experience and appreciation of how to learn and develop performance. That is not to say that the coach needs to be an expert in the actual tasks, but rather being skilled in how learning is transferred into practice. There is a wide range of communication skills that are important to effective coaching. To coach effectively leaders need to develop their own skills in several areas. These include:

- **Questioning**. Coaches raise questions at a number of levels and for a variety of purposes. For example:
  - Preliminary – Seeking initial information and clarification of facts and feeling. This is mainly descriptive.
  - Probing – Progressing to probing, analytical questions. Asking questions that might challenge performance.
  - Possibilities – Asking "future" and "possibility" questions. Questions that identify what next, or how good performance can be built on. These questions can also explore where more development is needed and how these and subsequent improvement might be achieved.

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- **Active listening**
  - Applying active listening skills to demonstrate that the coach is really "there" for the person being coached.
  - Confirming they are listening, paying attention to what is said and to body language being used.

- **Summarising** – a powerful technique, that does more than just check understanding.
  - Check your understanding of what the person you are coaching has said.
  - Summarising allows the other person to hear what you think they have said. They can then more clearly reflect on what they mean, and what has been understood. This often results in fresh insight or prompts more in-depth discussion.

- **Setting goals** – coaching conversations should be based on mutually agreed goals. These are best led by the person being coached, so that they "own" the goals. The coach needs to help the person they are coaching to identify goals that they find challenging and stimulating. Then ensure that they are specific, so that it is clear what success means and of when it will be achieved.

- **Discussion** – two-way conversation to explore issues, possibilities, and approaches to developing skills. Looking for opportunities to develop skills and reflecting on experiences.

- **Giving feedback** – providing your view on how someone is progressing. As far as possible, feedback should be based on objective evidence. There is a more detailed discussion of this topic in a later section.

5.4 A Coaching Process

There is a variety of coaching processes which can be used to help structure a coaching assignment. Most of them tend to follow a common management process:

- Reviewing what has been done.
- Planning what needs to be done.
- Doing, putting those plans into action.

Coaching is often about achieving a balance between challenge and support. The coaching skill is often about recognising when to challenge or stretch the person you are coaching, and when to provide support and encouragement. Perhaps when they are struggling or finding things difficult. Of course, it's easier to accept challenges and be willing to stretch your abilities when you feel supported, so the two approaches actually go hand-in-hand.

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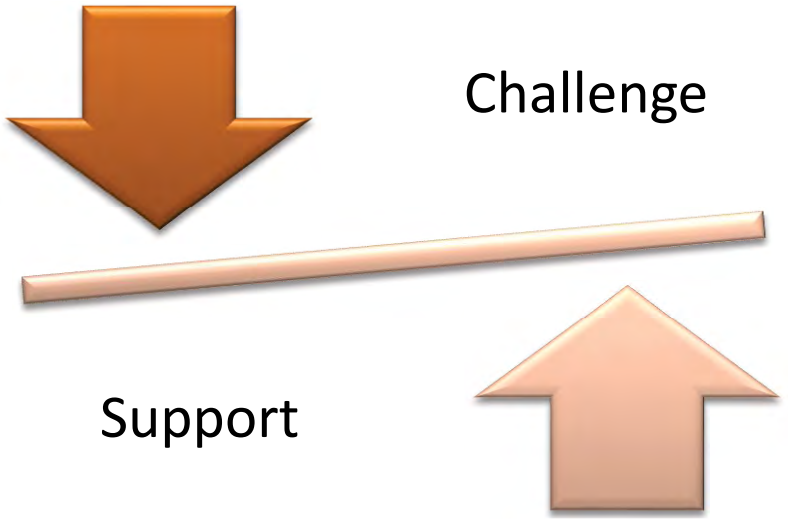
This approach to coaching is sometimes referred to as being a "critical friend". Holding the tension between a trusted friend and someone who is willing to provide an honest critique.



Of course, effective coaching is about being flexible and tailoring your approach to suit the particular person being coached, and the particular circumstances being addressed. For example, sometimes you may need to spur someone on, to stretch them, and to challenge them to try something new, or to improve further. Alternatively, someone you are coaching may need support or help when they are struggling with a particular issue. Or encouragement to step back and take a wider perspective about a particular issue that has bogged them down.

A process to give structure to coaching helps a coach to apply the communications skills discussed in the previous section, whilst continually balancing challenge and support. However, another important practice in coaching is the adoption of different coaching styles.

5.5 Coaching styles

The style of coaching support given or needed often varies, dependent on a few common factors:

- The capability of the person being coached.
- The preferences of the coach.
- The nature of the skills being coached.

There is a spectrum of styles used by coaches, typically based on the four summarised below. At one end of the spectrum there is a relatively structured approach, which is led by the coach. At the other end the person being coached has much more freedom to decide what to do. The four coaching styles are:

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Instructional coach

- More strctured coaching, with a directive approach, where the coach leads and sets the agenda.
- Often used when new skills are being introduced and the person being coached is relatively in-experienced.
- Also used where the task/activities are more prescriptive in nature.

Trainer coach

- Showing by example.
- This is a less-directive apporach, but still quite hands-on.
- Requires the coach to be proficient in the activities.
- Coach is recognised as a role model .

Stimulator coach

- Balancing support and challenge.
- Mutual repsonsibilty for goal setting.
- Coach encourages, stimulates development.
- Prompts the person being coached to propose options.

Synergistic coach

- The person being coached is often capable and takes the lead.
- Coach looks for synergies, how the perosn being coached can be helped by networks, and access to wider resources.
- "Sounding board" and "critical friend" tend to be important roles for the coach in this style.
- This style has overlaps with mentoring.

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6 Praising

In the previous section we discussed one important skill for effective coaching: providing feedback. Feedback can be used to give information or praise, but it is also extremely useful as a tool to help people to improve. Typically, it has two main purposes:

1. To motivate: when team members are performing well, feedback can increase confidence and encourage them to continue at that level of performance.
2. To correct: when team members are not performing as well as you would like, feedback can help determine how to change and improve their performance.

Good quality feedback can achieve a number of things. For example, it:

- Improves performance
- Helps motivation
- Boosts confidence
- Develops skills and understanding
- Shows people you value them

Feedback is used in a wide range of leadership and management activities. It is critical when:

- Providing coaching support.
- Conducting performance management reviews and appraisals.
- Engaging in more general, one-to-one discussions.
- Reviewing how well a delegated activity is progressing.
- Handling conflict.
- Facilitating.

6.1 Praising is amazing – the power of feedback as a motivational tool

Feedback is very much a part of organisational life, yet one aspect of giving feedback is often under used and undervalued. It is also an aspect of feedback that has considerable potential.

Feedback can be a simple yet powerful motivational tool. Just by praising people for what they have done, leaders can have a galvanising effect. It's strange that something so effective yet simple is so rarely or poorly done.

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Giving praise is a simple, two-step process:

1. Look out for the behaviours and practice you want to see.
2. As soon as you see what you want to encourage, make sure you praise the person.

Essentially, praising is giving people positive feedback, reinforcing and supporting good performance. Too often we are quick to point out weaknesses or where things are go wrong, and slow to praise what is done well.

6.2 Tips for giving positive feedback

Think about the value of giving positive feedback with these tips:

Praise
• Praising people for what is done well, is far more powerful than criticising for what was not done well.
Catch-people
• "Catch people" doing what you want to see.
Make it public
• Give positive feedback openly and publicly.
A simple practice
• Make this simple act of praising a routine part of your practice.
Improving performance
• If you want to see performance levels increase, this is one of the simplest and most powerful things you can do.
Quick and slow
• Be quick to praise, slow to blame.

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Of course, it's important to ensure your praise is appropriate and in proportion to what has been achieved. This means what you say will be credible, valid and worthwhile. The idea of positive feedback is captured well by Blaise Pascal when he said:

"Kind words do not cost much. They never blister the tongue or lips. They make other people good-natured. They also produce their own image on men's souls, and a beautiful image it is."

6.3 Effective feedback

So, by far the most important kind of feedback to give someone is positive feedback. Of course you will also need to give feedback where you want people to correct or improve their performance. There are some good general tips for ensuring that feedback achieves this purpose. To be effective, all feedback should be:

- Specific
- Descriptive and focused on actions not the person
- Honest and sincere
- Fair and accurate
- Future oriented – this is particularly important for corrective feedback

Of course, not all feedback is necessarily positive. There are always occasions when more difficult feedback needs to be provided. Here are some tips to bear in mind when providing corrective feedback:

1. Outline the performance area that needs attention and explain why the existing performance is causing concern.
2. Discuss and explore the reasons for the person's current performance, and show that you clearly understand the situation.
3. Ask if they have any suggestions on how to overcome any issues, and on ways to improve performance.
4. Ask what you can do to help.
5. Agree a mutual action plan for you both to take forward, and set a definite follow-up date.

Feedback is a vital skill for leaders and managers. Don't forget that:

- People tend to want to know how well they are doing.
- The purpose of providing feedback is to improve performance.
- It's always best to keep the two kinds of feedback separate. If you are going to praise someone then do so, but not at the same time as providing corrective feedback. People will tend to only remember what they perceive as negative.
- You should try to ensure that you praise more than you correct.

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Tim Waterstone, the founder of UK based book retailer Waterstone's captures what he considers to be the link between positive feedback and leadership:

"I believe that the mindset that allows you to spend your working life thanking and congratulating people rather than being unpleasant to them is the mainstay of good leadership."

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7 Presenting

One area that can be a challenge for many people is delivering a presentation. For some, this can be especially problematic when the situation really matters. Think about pressure situations where you might be required to present. For example, presenting to:

- The Chief Executive or senior management team in your organisation.
- A critical client meeting, presenting to win an important contract.
- To a hostile and anxious group of employees, perhaps worried about their jobs.
- At an interview for a job you really want.

Whatever the context, the purpose of presentations is to send and receive information, but to do it in a way that makes people WANT to hear what you say.

7.1 Getting your message across

Getting your message across is more than just saying the right things, though that would be a useful start. Think about the last time you delivered a presentation. Reflect on what went well, and what didn't go so well.

The start-point for getting your message across is to consider these critical questions:

Firstly, what is the purpose of your presentation?

When you've answered that, try being more specific by asking:

What do you hope to achieve?

- Are you trying to influence?
- Are you delivering a strategy?
- Are you trying to sell an idea?
- Are you trying to sell yourself? (at a job interview for example)
- Are you proposing a plan?
- Are you reporting on a project?
- Are you facilitating a group?
- Are you running a training session?

Presentations can be used for a wide variety of purposes. Knowing why you are presenting gives you clarity on what you need to say and how you might say it.

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To get your message across effectively, it's useful to consider these two perspectives:

- Firstly, what do you want to say?
- Secondly, what do you think those present have come to hear?

Dale Carnegie, the famous US writer on public speaking once said:

"There are always three speeches, for every one you actually gave. The one you practiced, the one you gave, and the one you wished you gave."

There is a fourth that could be added to Carnegie's list:

- The one the audience received.

It is worth remembering that different parts of your presentation will appeal to different groups of your audience.

7.2 Beginnings and ending

When we are asked about our experience of a service it is interesting to note how we respond. Research from the behavioural sciences suggests that some things matter more than others. For example, how do customers experience the passage of time and interpret events after they are over?

- People remember beginnings well.
- Endings are remembered better than beginnings, and have a bigger impact on customers.
- Positive peaks within the service contribute to customer satisfaction.

Clearly, beginnings matter. So in preparing your presentation, spend plenty of time making sure that you start well. A good beginning will both give you confidence for the rest of the presentation, and engage the audience.

It seems that endings matter even more than beginnings. Many presenters will finish with a summary or re-cap but try to go beyond that. Plan to end on a high, sending you audience away both well-informed and motivated.

7.3 The 60 second test

One way to start outlining your presentation is to ask yourself some initial questions. Starting with the 60 seconds test:

- If you only had 60 seconds to get your messages across, what would the headlines be?
- What is the title of the presentation? – the title may give you a steer or a theme.

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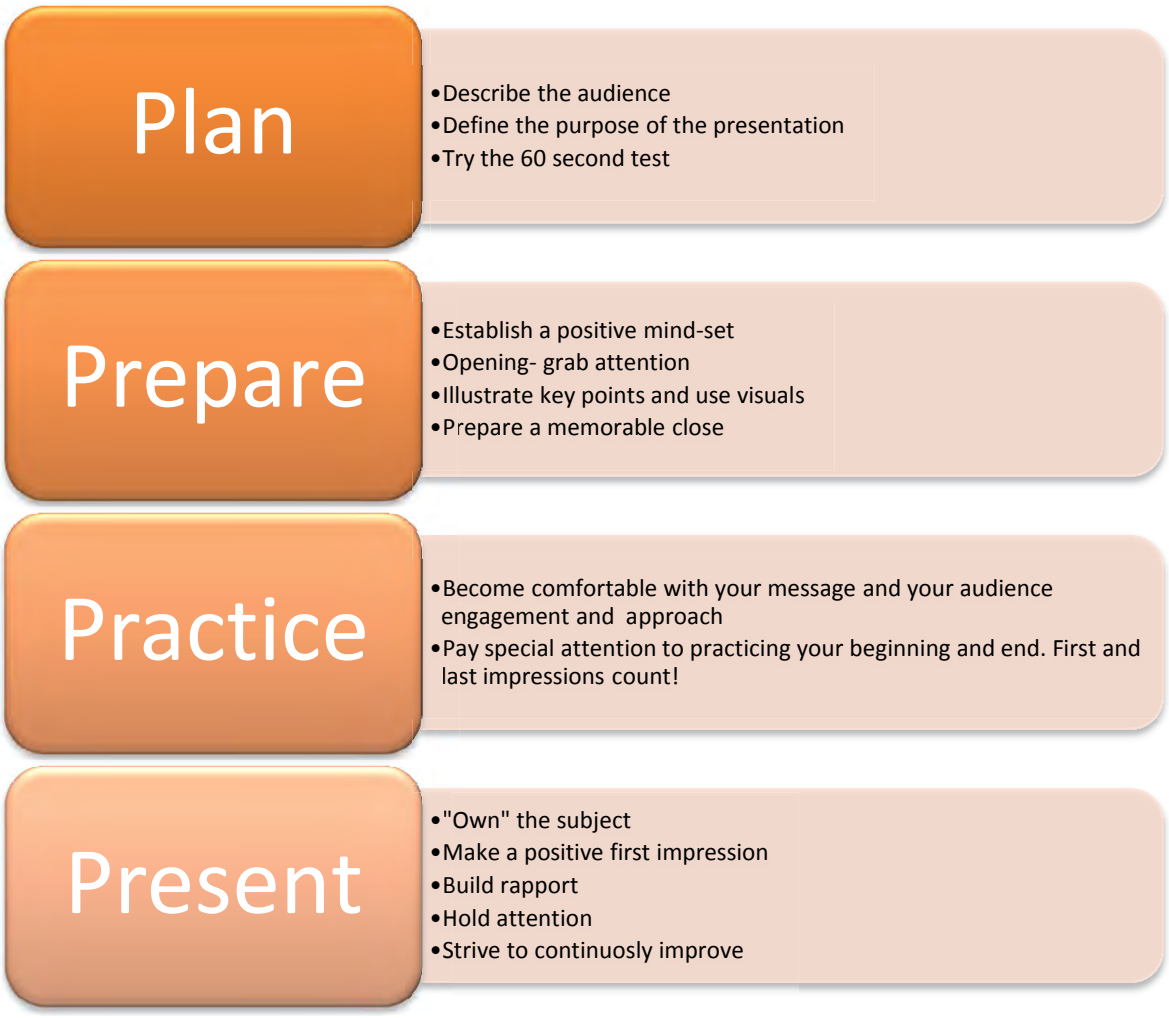
- What do you want people to be able to do at the end of the presentation? What result do you want to achieve?
- What is the purpose of the presentation – to sell, to influence, to persuade, to report back?
- What information could you provide in another way? Curiosity-raising questions, handing out information in a fact sheet at the end.
- Who do you need to communicate with? Write down some names if it helps you to picture them.

7.4 Presentation checklist

The 60 seconds test will give you some initial thoughts for your presentation, but for really effective presentations, you need a process. Use this four-stage checklist to help you develop and deliver an effective presentation.


Plan
•Describe the audience
•Define the purpose of the presentation
•Try the 60 second test
Prepare
•Establish a positive mind-set
•Opening- grab attention
•Illustrate key points and use visuals
•Prepare a memorable close
Practice
•Become comfortable with your message and your audience engagement and approach
•Pay special attention to practicing your beginning and end. First and last impressions count!
Present
•"Own" the subject
•Make a positive first impression
•Build rapport
•Hold attention
•Strive to continuosly improve

"An effective speaker knows that the success or failure of his talk is not for him to decide – it will be decided in the minds and hearts of his hearers." Dale Carnegie

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8 Handling conflict

Handling conflict at work is a never easy. It's something few people like to deal with, yet it is a vital aspect of the manager's role. Leaving conflicts unresolved can affect morale and de-stabilise the working environment. Not just for those at the centre of the conflict but often for the team around them.

8.1 What's the problem?

The first step in handling conflict is to be aware of the possible reason behind the conflict. There a numerous reasons why conflicts emerge, including:

- Personal clashes
- Misunderstandings
- Differences in values
- Poor communication
- Misuse of power
- Bullying behaviour
- Feelings of injustice over real or perceived unfair treatment

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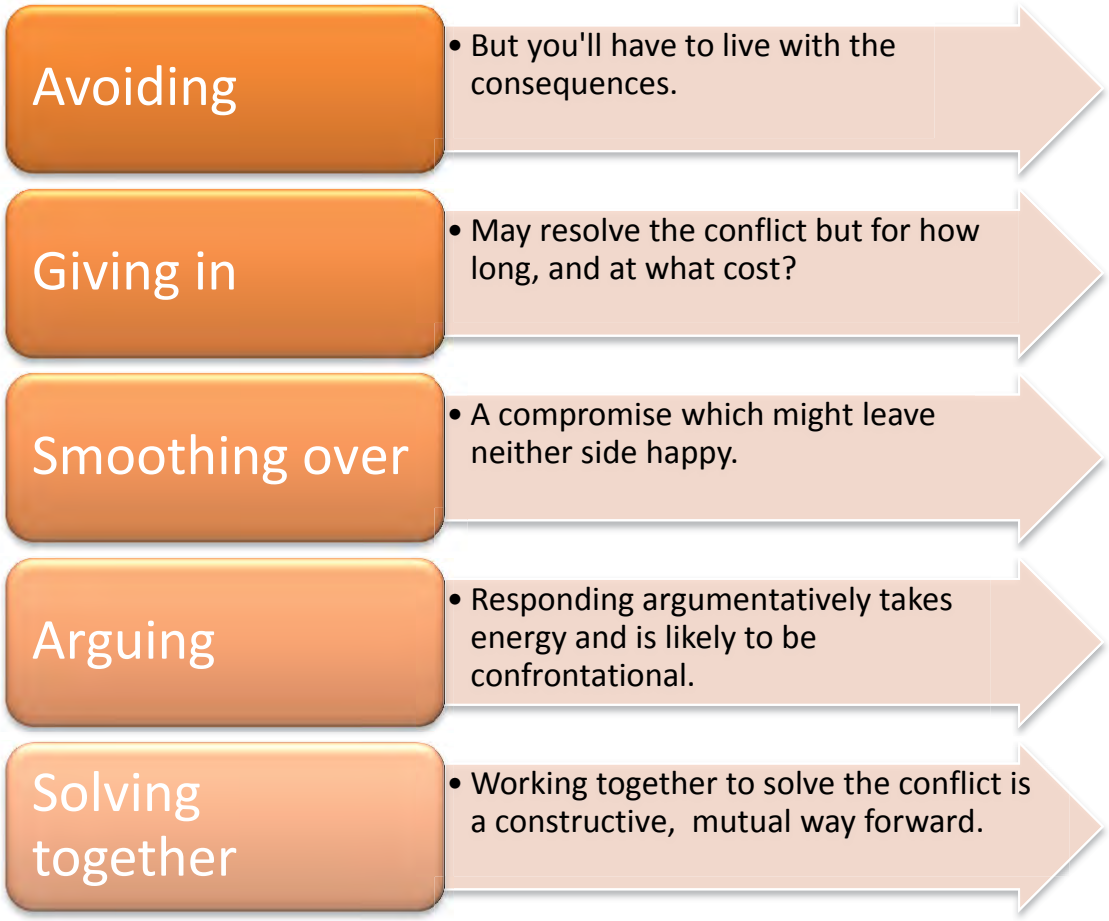
By definition some conflicts are easier to handle than others. Some can be resolved with straightforward intervention. In other cases you may need the support of your line managers or HR team. To help you decide which route to conflict resolution is best, it's important to consider the different types of response.

8.2 Typical responses to conflict

Firstly, conflict isn't necessarily a bad thing. There are bound to be disagreements between people at work and, if dealt with constructively, the outcomes can be very positive. Dealing with conflict can clear the air, and it can also help surface differences which may make everyone think differently. It can also contribute to better understanding of each other.

Whilst conflict can lead to positive outcomes, typically we are not very good at handling it. This might especially be the case where we are unused to dealing with conflict, or are fearful of its consequences. For this reason, most people will have a preferred way of dealing with difficult situations. A good place to start thinking about communication skills in handling conflict is recognising that there are different ways that people behave. There are a number of ways in which people instinctively deal with conflict at work. For example:


Avoiding
• But you'll have to live with the consequences.
Giving in
• May resolve the conflict but for how long, and at what cost?
Smoothing over
• A compromise which might leave neither side happy.
Arguing
• Responding argumentatively takes energy and is likely to be confrontational.
Solving together
• Working together to solve the conflict is a constructive, mutual way forward.

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You could argue that all five responses can have their place:

- Avoiding conflict might be all that you can cope with at the moment. Perhaps there is too much else on at the time, so this approach allows you to cope, albeit temporarily.
- Giving in might be workable because you just want the situation resolved and need to move on.
- Smoothing it over could be an accommodation that you decide is good enough.
- Arguing could work in that it allows you to say exactly what you do think about the situation and gets it "off your chest".
- Solving together, not surprisingly, is the approach advocated.

However, whilst some responses may enable you to cope with a given circumstance, using the first four approaches will depend on the exact nature of the conflict. Repeated use of these responses could be detrimental. By far the best approach is to cultivate behaviours which enable you to adopt the fifth approach: working together to solve the conflict.

Here's why.

8.3 Solving conflict together

The first two approaches suggest a passive response to conflict.

- Avoiding conflict – Whilst avoiding conflict may at first seem the least damaging way forward, it can often lead to feelings of frustration and anger.
- Giving in – To give in suggests that you don't or can't face the challenge of resolving the conflict. More often than not, giving in can result in feelings of resentment and frustration.

The second two approaches require more engagement with the conflict.

- Smoothing over – To smooth over a conflict means that you have at least recognised that there is a conflict. The act of smoothing over means there is at least some engagement with conflicting parties, and that you have decided to address it by compromise.
- Responding argumentatively – In contrast to smoothing things over, responding argumentatively typically assumes the position of being right in the conflict. Whilst this can reveal insights into the conflict itself, and those in conflict, unchecked or uncontrolled arguing can prolong, escalate or worsen the situation.

The final approach is built upon mutual engagement.

- Work together to solve the conflict – This approach predominantly means adopting a problem solving mind set. This seeks understanding, options and resolution by engaging all parties.

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Typically working together to solve the conflict involves a five stage process:

Gaining clarity
• About what the conflict is actually about.
Other people's shoes
• Seeing things from the other person's perspective.
Your view
• Putting your perspective forward.
Possible resolutions
• Identifying possible resolutions to the conflict that both parties can accept.
Agree progress
• Agreeing a way forward together.

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Successfully handling a conflict means applying typical management skills, such as problem solving and decision making. But it also means using the inter-personal communication skills discussed earlier in this book. Active listening, body language, building rapport and influencing must all be employed. Important as your general management skills may be, the way you communicate can also significantly affect the outcome of a conflict.

Remember that:

"Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude." (William James US philosopher)

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9 Facilitating

How often do you come away from meetings or away-days/off-sites with the feeling that things just got harder and instead of progress you come away feeling you have taken several steps back. What's the answer? Effective facilitation.

9.1 What is facilitation?

Facilitation is often seen as a neutral role, using guidance and encouragement tactics to help team members to achieve the objectives of the meeting. However, properly used, there is nothing neutral about the potential power of effective facilitation. It can do more than help the team to meet objectives. Using a structured facilitation approach can help bring out the best in any team

Facilitation skills are at a premium. Whether it's a team meeting, an away-day/off-site, or a conference, the effectiveness of such events is often determined by how well they are facilitated. That difference can make all the difference. For example, think about the value gained when:

- Everyone feels involved and engaged in a meeting on how to take things forward.
- Ideas are allowed or encouraged to flow at a meeting.
- You leave a meeting feeling it had purpose and direction, and it achieved something.
- A clear set of actions are agreed and everyone feels motivated to make them happen.

Facilitation helps to get the best from any meeting. It can help prevent:

- Meetings that feel like you do nothing but go round in circles.
- A hi-jack situation, where the loud few dominate or disrupt.
- An important problem never really getting resolved because nobody has conducted a structured analysis of the problem.

You can also think of facilitation as the art and science of helping groups in their thinking, planning and decision-making. Too often we don't realise the knowledge and potential that we have within the team or group of people that we've brought together. In many cases, the insights and knowledge needed to solve problems or identify innovative ways forward are already there in the organisation. The skill to unlock that knowledge and expertise is often found in the form of facilitation.

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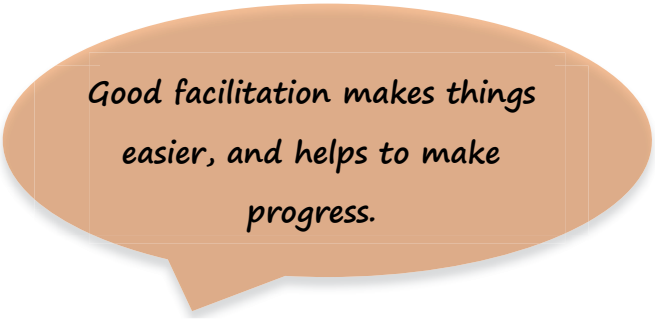
9.2 Facilitation – focus on progress

How can facilitation make so much of a difference? To answer that, the definition of the word is instructive in itself. Facilitation is:

- To make action or processes easier.
- To help forward or to help progress



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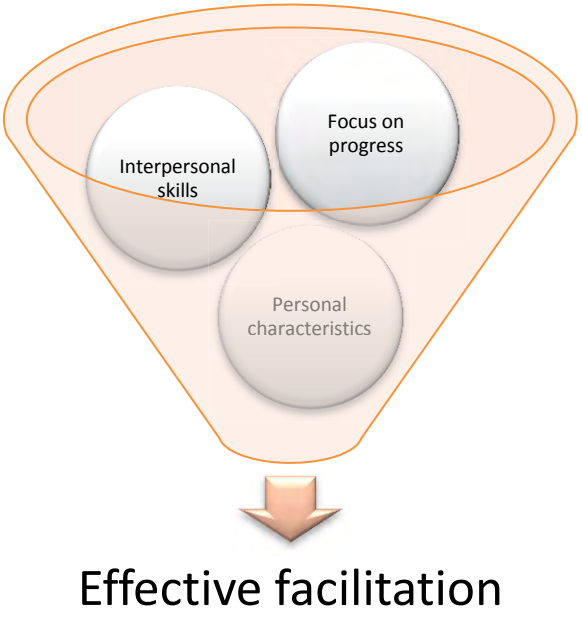
There are three main elements to effective facilitation:



If you can combine these effectively, then you'll be in a position to reap the benefits of resourceful people gathered together in a team setting. Next we'll consider each of these in turn.

9.3 Facilitation – making progress

The key challenge of facilitation is to ensure progress is achieved. To do this you need to focus on the event you are facilitating. Facilitating well is not easy. The first and foremost task when facilitating is to progress towards the aim and goal of the meeting or event. To do this you need to:

- Ensure enthusiasm and meaningful intent is clearly conveyed, setting the meeting tone right from the start, and motivating those present.
- Manage the level of activity and engagement.
- Observe the energy levels at stages of the event and adjust the pace accordingly. Provide a short break, or change of activity when energy levels are low.
- Help the group identify connections.
- Make sure feedback from group discussion is short and focused, avoid "death by feedback". For example, ask sub-groups to feedback three things they have discussed, or what they felt was most important.
- Acknowledge ideas and contribution, build a consensus.
- Build a balance between:
    - Initiating

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- Posing questions
- Summarising
- Moving things on
- Keeping to time
- Developing actions
- Concluding
- Managing people, contributions and involvement

9.4 Interpersonal skills for facilitation

To manage progress you not only need to keep things on track, but just as importantly you need to use good interpersonal skills. These include:

- Building rapport – We discussed rapport earlier in this e-book. In this context, rapport is about meeting people at their level, ensuring they are comfortable with you. An important aspect of rapport is empathising with people's viewpoints and establishing credibility to enable people to contribute with ease.
- Communicating effectively, both verbally and non-verbally – Being supportive and using language that is familiar to the group so that you don't set yourself apart from the language you use. Body language will also indicate that you are attentive, positive, supportive, and engaged with their discussions.
- Active listening – demonstrating your interest by confirmatory comments ("yes I see", "go on" etc.). And using body language which is open and demonstrates your interest. Each really matter, helping to set the tone and climate of the meeting or event.
- Questioning techniques – you can use questions as a very powerful facilitation skill. Use these to check understanding; ask for clarification, or for a view to be expanded. You can also ask questions to get people thinking differently (For example: Why do you think that might be? What else might explain that? How might we do things differently? Etc….)

9.5 Personal Characteristics

The third skill set for effective facilitation relates to personal characteristics. The first point to make is perhaps an obvious one, but an important one nonetheless – everyone is different. Therefore everyone should play to their strengths and use their own personal characteristics to ensure they are effective.

So think about what you personally bring to the facilitating of a session. What individual strengths do you have that can help facilitate progress and make things easier? For example, think about your own:

- Ability to learn (before, during and after the meeting).
- Friendliness (but don't be false or act unnaturally).

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- Sensitivity.
- Integrity.
- Sense of humour.
- Openness to change.
- Self-awareness.

Of course, whilst it's important to be self-aware, don't forget to think about how others may perceive your personal characteristics in relation to each of these areas. To what extent does this affect your ability to facilitate or manage?

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10 Leading team meetings

Team meetings! It's been said that there are only two kinds of activities in an organisation:

1. Attending meetings
2. Answering the phone for others who are away attending meetings.

How often do we hear complaints that there are too many meetings, which are too long, and which are too badly run. Yet meetings are crucial to the functioning of any team – as long as they are properly conducted. Being able to schedule and run a meeting is a crucial skill for any team leader. Why? Because:

A meeting in time, saves nine!

10.1 Effective team meetings – why meet?

The starting point for leading effective team meetings is to understand them. This starts with this fundamental question: why meet? There are many valuable and valid reasons for scheduling a team meeting. They can be used to:

- consult by giving or receiving advice
- make decisions
- share information
- solve problems
- generate creative ideas
- enable face to face contact
- negotiate or influence
- benefit from several minds, all focused on one problem
- brief – for example, give information to the team
- review – give a progress report
- develop the team
- ensure the same message is given to all
- make effective use of time – but only if the meeting is led effectively!

So before calling a meeting, make sure you're clear in your own mind why you're calling it. Ensuring your meeting addresses some of the above reasons is a good place to start.

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10.2 Types of meeting

Meetings may be formal or informal. Formal meetings tend to be a part of the fabric of some organisations. These may have written remits and be a part of a hierarchy of meetings where reports are tabled. Formal meetings will often consist of such things as:

- A pre-arranged meeting time or schedule.
- An agenda – a description of items to be discussed.
- A set of minutes – a written record of the issues discussed at the meeting.
- A chairperson – to lead, co-ordinate or control.
- An administrator or secretary – to keep a record of the meeting.
- An agreed process and procedure.

Alternatively, informal meetings typically don't require the same structure or processes. For example, informal meetings may involve:

- Being arranged randomly or at short notice.
- Unstructured discussion.
- No procedures or process.
- Anyone taking the lead.
- The noting of action points – things individuals agreed to do.

10.3 Effective team meetings: the basics

Rule number one:

Only hold a meeting if it's absolutely necessary! If you're calling the meeting, make sure it's really necessary. Could you achieve its objectives in any other way? Think about the cost in time, money and resource use. Don't manage your business with busyness!

If you're being called to a meeting, ask yourself: do you really need to attend? For many people, the number of meetings they're asked to attend can have a significant effect on the time they actually have to get things done. Even if it's your boss who has called the meeting, try to be objective!

One of the most important elements of effective meetings is to ensure the right people are present. It might be useful to think of Reg Revans' "3 who's" when we are inviting people to meetings:

- Who knows?
- Who can?
- Who cares?

Only invite people who need to be present or who can make a worthwhile contribution.

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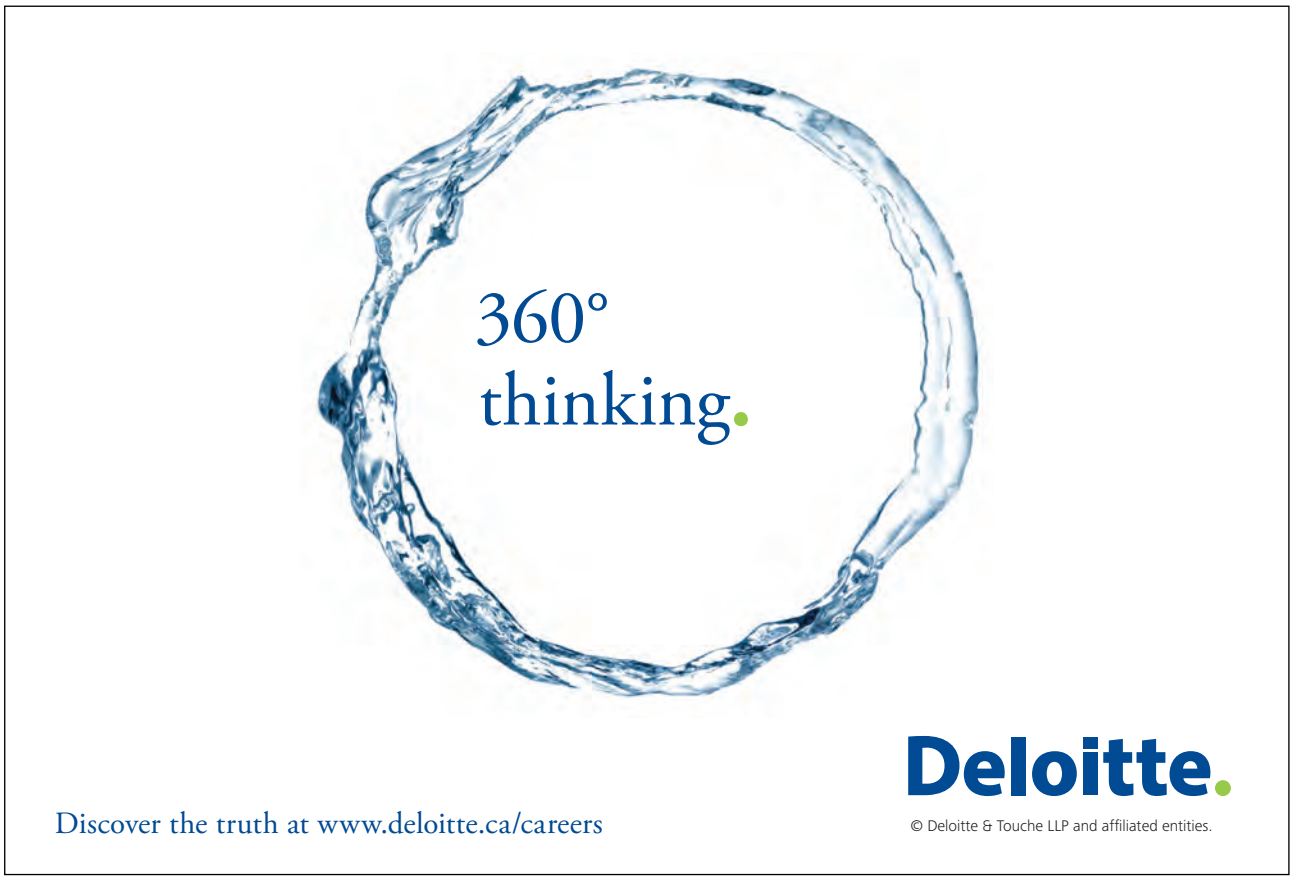
Another key to effective team meetings is your reputation! Try to build a reputation for running meetings well. Think about the advice above. Involve and engage others, and try to use the meeting to make decisions that promote action. One major concern with meetings is that they replace real work, and become talking shops with no action. Develop your meeting skills so that real work is achieved and facilitated, by running effective meetings. How do you do this?

10.4 Meetings tips – before, during and after

> Meetings – the practical alternative to work!

Before the meeting:

- Ensure you really need the meeting.
- Set specific, realistic, achievable goals.
- Prepare and distribute an agenda and any (necessary) supporting documentation.
- Issue a start and finish time for the meeting.
- Estimate time for agenda items in advance.
- Invite only key people or team members, not everybody you can think of.
- Be prepared.



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During

- Start on time.
- Keep the team on track.
- Make decisions, don't just air views.
- Summarise and record decisions.
- Keep the team involved – remember they are there for a reason.
- Control dominating characters.
- End on time.

After

- Send minutes to participants.
- Follow-up on agreed actions.
- Debrief with key figures.
- Assess the content of the meeting – what came out of it.
- Assess the process of the meeting – what needs to change from it.

10.5 Managing content and process

A useful way to think about a meeting is to distinguish between content and process.

The content of the meeting refers to:

- Why has the meeting been called?
- What needs to be done?
- Who should do it?
- When should it be done?
- What information is needed?

The process of the meeting is about ensuring that:

- People's interactions are managed.
- Contributions are shared around the group.
- Agreement is active not passive.
- Digressions are managed.
- Decisions are made using fair decision making processes.

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10.6 Facilitating team meetings

This is also a helpful way to think about facilitation skills. Effectively combining meeting content with essential process steps will help your teams gain the most from their knowledge and skills, and to achieve agreed outcomes.

Leading team meetings effectively requires a wide range of skills. These include the ability to focus on how meetings/workshops are progressing, blended with your own inter-personal skills, and your personal characteristics. Developing facilitation skills and combining these with team leadership is not easy. To become really good at both of these you need to:

- Build your knowledge base
- Think about what you are doing
- Then get plenty of practice

"Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand."
(Chinese proverb)

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11 What next?

This book has explored a range of advanced inter-personal skills for leaders and managers:

- Influencing
- Persuading
- Delegating
- Coaching
- Delegating
- Praising the power of feedback
- Giving a presentation
- Handling conflict
- Facilitating
- Leading team meetings

These build on the foundational skills which we discussed in the companion e-book – Hidden Communication Skills Revealed:

- Active listening
- Body language skills
- Assertiveness
- Questioning skills

Becoming proficient in these core and advanced skills will enable you to become more effective in the workplace, and enhance your career prospects. Read both books, practice the tips, and develop the communication career skills that will make you stand-out from the crowd!

For more on how to become a more persuasive leader, follow this link to the ideas, tips and tools on our website: www.the-happy-manager.com